

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC *Hilton Village Historic District
*(listed on National Register as Hilton Village)

AND/OR COMMON

Hilton Village Historic District

2 LOCATION

Roughly the area bound on the north by Warwick Boulevard; on the east by
STREET & NUMBER Hopkins Street; on the south by River Road; and on the west by Post
Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Newport News

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1-Paul S. Trible

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY

Independent City

CODE

700

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☒ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☒ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☒ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☒ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Multiple (See continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clerk of Court

STREET & NUMBER

Newport News City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Newport News

STATE

Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Report # 121-1; National Register of
Historic Places

DATE

1969, 1969

☒ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission; National Register of Historic Places

TOWN

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Hilton Village Historic District is situated adjacent to the east bank of the James River and is located approximately two miles north of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company shipyard. The village encompasses an area of approximately 65 acres and contains approximately 300 edifices, most of which were constructed under the auspices of the federal government in 1918 and 1919. Designed to resemble the villages of Tudor England, Hilton has mostly Jacobethan style structures, but numerous examples of the Dutch and Georgian Colonial modes are present as well.

The Hilton Village planning team selected this particular site, originally known as the Darling Tract, because of its accessibility to the shipyard via a planned extension of the Newport News streetcar line and the levelness of terrain which made clearing and site preparation relatively simple. In designing the village layout the planning team utilized a modified gridiron street pattern with streets running perpendicular and avenues parallel to the James River. The streets purposely were made narrow in the hope of discouraging automobile traffic and ranged in width from 20 to 50 feet. Building lots ranged in width from 25 to 40 feet, and their depth was set at between 118 and 130 feet so that the tenants could have gardens. Less than half of the 200 acres available was utilized for the project. Most of the area south of River Road to the James River was set aside for the future construction of large homes, and most of the acreage west of Post Street was earmarked for a Hilton Village Extension, which was planned but never constructed.

The decision to model Hilton after an early English village undoubtedly reflected the influence of the British "new towns" movement on the project's planners. Utilizing basically the Jacobethan, Dutch Colonial, and Georgian Colonial styles, the architects devised fourteen different variations on these themes and designed edifices ranging in height from one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half stories and a width from two to twelve bays. By placing houses of different styles and sizes throughout the village instead of grouping them, they managed to avoid the "tract house" look. Despite the fact that all the houses were of wood frame construction, they were given further individuality by alternately sheathing them either in stucco, shingles, or clapboards. Windows were either of the six-over-six wood sash or six-paned casement variety and were set in rectangular surrounds. To a large degree, the steeply pitched and angular slate covered roofs, including the gambrel, hipped, clipped gambrel, gable, and clipped gable types, were responsible for giving the village its unique character.

The planners devoted a great deal of attention to the interiors of the homes as well, and they were given features that were somewhat unusual for that era. In addition to excellent hardwood floors, each residence had built-in double Murphy beds and wardrobe dressers in the bedrooms and cabinets in the dining room. For cooking each had a coal range and for heating purposes, all had fireplaces and floor heaters.

MAJOR GEOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ca. 65

UTM REFERENCES

A	118	3698710	4099450
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	118	3703000	4099030

E	118	3695410	4099040
B	118	3703000	4099190
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	118	3699170	4099630

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See last page of description)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE

Ralph J. Christian, Project Coordinator, National Historic Landmarks Project

ORGANIZATION

American Association for State and Local History

DATE

June 1979

STREET & NUMBER

1400 Eighth Avenue, South

TELEPHONE

(615) 242-5583

CITY OR TOWN

Nashville

STATE

Tennessee 37203

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ☐

STATE ☐

LOCAL ☐

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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Approximately two-thirds of the residential edifices are single family structures, and the remainder are largely duplexes with a scattering of multiple occupancy townhouses. The first two types are scattered throughout the village and differ little architecturally. In fact, a large number of duplexes have the appearance of attached single family dwellings, and many now actually have two owners. The townhouses, on the other hand, have a strongly Jacobethan flavor, and all are located on Warwick Boulevard. Originally, these were intended for married employees who had few or no children. Arranged in rows of six to eight units, each unit contained four to six rooms, including a combination kitchen and dining room. In recent years most of these structures have been converted to commercial purposes, but a few still serve as residences.

Because they viewed Hilton Village as a total community, its planners laid out a commercial district along Warwick Boulevard featuring stores with small upstairs apartments, a hotel, a bowling alley, a movie house, a lodge hall, and a billiard parlor. In addition, they set aside land for four churches, a school, a community building, a park, an apartment complex, a community garage, and a railroad station. By the time construction halted in 1919, virtually the entire plan had been carried out with the exception of the community building, the apartments, the garage, and the railroad station.

To a remarkable degree, Hilton Village has managed to retain much of its original character and a large portion of its architectural integrity. Most of its residential structures have undergone little alteration and have managed to retain most of their original exterior features. Although the commercial section has changed somewhat, most of the original edifices are still extant, and the more recent ones do not noticeably detract from the area's historic character. None of the original churches remain standing, and the ones erected in their place are generally compatible with the architecture of the village as a whole. Since 1972 Hilton Village has been subject to a historic zoning ordinance administered by a special architectural review board charged with protecting and preserving its character.

Boundary Justification. The boundary described below encompasses an area of approximately 65 acres and consists of nearly 300 structures. It

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closely coincides with the boundary of Hilton Village at the time the Emergency Fleet Corporation completed it in 1919.

Boundary Description. As indicated in red on the accompanying maps [(1) U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series, Virginia, Newport News North Quad., 1965, photorevised 1970 and 1973; (2) Newport News Department of City Planning and Community Development Sketch Map, ca. 1974, revised at AASLH in 1979], a line beginning on the northern edge of the right-of-way of River Road at a point adjacent to the western edge of Block 3, lot 64 (47 Post Street) and extending southeastwardly approximately 1,500 feet along the western edges of Block 3, lots 64, 63, 62, 61, 60, 59, 58, 57, 56, 55, 54, 53, 52, 51, 49, 48, 47, 46, 45; Block 8, lots 43, 42, 41, 40, 39, 38, 37, 36, 35, 34, 33, 30; and Block 6, lot 24 (47 through 99 Post Street and 10405 and 10404 Warwick Boulevard inclusive) to the northern edge of Block 6, lot 24 (10404 Warwick Boulevard); thence, southeastwardly approximately 130 feet along the northern edges of Block 1, lots 24, 25, 26 (10404, 10402, and 10400 Warwick Boulevard) to the western edge of the right-of-way of Post Street; thence, southwestwardly approximately 25 feet along said right-of-way to an unmarked point opposite the southern edge of the right-of-way of a paved alley; thence, southeastwardly approximately 1,700 feet along said right-of-way to the western edge of the right-of-way of Hopkins Street; thence, southwardly approximately 150 feet along said right-of-way to the northern edge of the right-of-way of Warwick Boulevard; thence, southeastwardly approximately 200 feet along said right-of-way to an unmarked point opposite the northeast corner of Block 6, lot 34 (10362 Warwick Boulevard); thence, southwestwardly approximately 1,400 feet along the eastern edges of Block 6, lots 34, 30, 29, 28, 27, 26, 25, 24, 23, 22, 21, 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 (10362 Warwick Boulevard and 44 through 100 Hopkins Street inclusive) to the northern edge of the right-of-way of River Road; thence, northwestwardly approximately 1,700 feet along said right-of-way to the point of beginning.

AMERICAN WAYS OF LIFE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		American Ways of Life (planned industrial communities)

SPECIFIC DATES 1918-present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Builder:

Emergency Fleet Corporation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE Architect: Henry V. Hubbard, town planner; Joseph D. Leland III and Francis Y. Joannes, architects; and Francis H. Bulot, sanitary engineer.

"The First World War," according to distinguished urban scholar Blake McKelvey, "provided an incentive for the development of important new relationships" between the federal government, municipalities, and private business.¹ No where was this better illustrated, says historian Parke Rouse, Jr., than in the construction of Hilton Village, "the nation's first government-built planned community." Jointly planned by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company and the United States Shipping Board, the \$1.2 million project was designed to provide housing for the shipyard's workers and was carried to completion by the board's construction wing, the Emergency Fleet Corporation between May, 1918 and the end of 1919.

Hilton Village was the first of some 100 government financed and constructed housing projects during World War I. It was also the most important, because, according to local historian Ruth H. Chambers, "the initial step in awakening Congress to the alarming housing shortage and its relation to the war effort, was undertaken by Homer L. Ferguson, then president of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company. As a direct result of Mr. Ferguson's dramatic appearance before a Congressional committee in January, 1918, the Federal agencies involved gradually established an extraordinary housing program of which Hilton Village might in effect, be called the pilot project."³

Hilton Village was also one of the first communities in the nation to utilize the concept of "team planning" whereby town planners, architects, and engineers worked jointly to produce a unified plan for town development. "Because Hilton Village was conceived within the framework

¹Blake McKelvey, The Emergence of Metropolitan America, 1915-1966 (New Brunswick, N.J., 1968), 23.

²Parke Rouse, Jr., Endless Harbor: The Story of Newport News (Newport News, 1969), 53.

³Ruth H. Chambers, Hilton Village, 1918-1968 (Newport News, 1968), 7-8.

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of this new approach," says the Newport News City Planning Department, "extensive research went into the financial aspects of construction and the needs of the families expected to occupy the development."⁴ This type of practice, according to Chambers, was "subsequently emulated by the Government and . . . was later hailed as an outstanding contribution to the new city-planning movement."⁵

Even more important, Hilton Village and similar projects like it, according to urban historians Charles N. Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, set "a precedent for government action in housing."⁶ Although efforts to continue and expand similar programs in the 1920's failed, they came to fruition later with the housing and slum clearance programs of the New Deal. Since the 1930's, federal housing programs have been greatly expanded and have become one of the major areas of government social and economic endeavor.

The Hilton Village Historic District is situated near the east bank of the James River and approximately two miles north of the Newport News shipyard. It encompasses an area of approximately 65 acres and consists of approximately 300 residential, commercial, religious, and educational structures. Constructed for the most part in 1918 and 1919, it is modeled after the English villages of the Tudor era. Architecturally, the Jacobethan, Dutch Colonial, and Georgian Colonial styles predominate. For the most part, these structures have undergone relatively little exterior alteration, and they appear to be well-maintained.

History

The genesis of Hilton Village grew out of the problems encountered by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company following American

⁴Newport News City Planning Department, Hilton Village After Fifty Years (Newport News, 1968), 6.

⁵Chambers, Hilton Village, 9-10.

⁶Charles N. Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, A History of Urban America (New York, 1967), 296.

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entry into World War I in April, 1917. Because of the urgent need for ships to send aid to the Allies, especially in the face of a highly successful German submarine campaign, shipbuilding became one of the most vital aspects of the war effort. To meet this crisis, the Newport News shipyard rapidly expanded its facilities and doubled its workforce from approximately 7,000 to 14,000. This sudden influx of people produced major problems because the city did not have sufficient housing for them. As a result living conditions declined, housing costs increased sharply, shipyard morale declined, and many workers, particularly the more skilled ones with families, quit their jobs and moved elsewhere.

By late 1917 the instability of the shipyard's labor force, especially the loss of many essential workers, had begun to seriously affect the facility's productive capacity. The gravity of the situation for the war effort was further accentuated by the activities of German submarines which sank seven million tons of shipping that year, while the United States and Great Britain combined built only 3.4 million tons. In October, 1917, the Newport News Shipping and Dry Dock Company decided to embark on a large scale housing construction program in the belief that the government would make loans available to finance it.

To develop a unified plan the shipyard hired noted landscape architect Henry V. Hubbard as town planner, Joseph D. Leland III as architect, and Francis H. Bulot as sanitary engineer. The utilization of this team approach was, according to Chambers, "a distinct innovation. . . . This was a practice subsequently emulated by the Government and one which was later hailed as an outstanding contribution to the new city-planning movement."⁷ Acting on their recommendation, the company purchased an option on a heavily wooded 200-acre tract, whose only structure was an old homestead called "Hilton," located two miles north of the shipyard. By December of 1917, Hubbard, Leland, and Bulot had begun preparing preliminary drawings and development plans.

In early January, 1918, Homer L. Ferguson, president of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, appeared before the U. S. Shipping Board to complain about the housing situation and its impact on shipyard production. His testimony spurred an investigation on the part of the board, and its investigators concurred in Ferguson's gloomy assessment of the situation. A few days later, Ferguson reappeared before the

⁷Chambers, Hilton Village, 9-10.

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board to present the shipyard's plan to provide housing for five hundred highly skilled workers and their families. Under the terms of his proposal, the company would purchase the land and supervise its development if the government agreed to pay the costs of development and construction. On January 11, 1918, the board voiced its approval of the project which eventually became Hilton Village, appropriated \$1.2 million to finance it, and placed its construction in the hands of the Emergency Fleet Corporation.

With the financial question settled, planning for the project entered its final phase. Although Leland soon left to take a government job, his position as architect was capably filled by Francis Y. Joannes, who along with Leland and Bulot had completed their plan for Hilton Village by the spring of 1918. These three individuals and their staffs first thoroughly analyzed shipyard payrolls to determine what employees could afford to spend for housing and came up with a range of \$25-35 monthly. They then interviewed workers' wives to learn their preferences as to house size and type, and eventually they developed fourteen variations. Finally, they conducted a cost analysis incorporating this data and covering every aspect of construction and determined that each house would cost approximately \$3,200. Henry V. Hubbard revealed the thinking of the planning team in an article in the July, 1918 issue of the Journal of the American Institute of Architects when he declared that

Temporary housing, after the war is little better than scrap; indeed, it may be much worse and not being destroyed degenerates into the worse type of slum, a destroyer of local land values, a menace to the tenant and a reproach upon the country. . . . For the married man with a family efficient living conditions comprise all those things which we recognize as necessary to a complete town; proper houses, rightly situated and arranged; roads, water, sewerage, fire protection, stores, markets, churches, schools, theatres, club-houses, parks, playgrounds, playfields, and so on. Any government industrial housing development which does not find all these things already provided must provide, and if necessary, pay for them itself.⁸

⁸Quoted in Newport News City Planning Department, Hilton Village After Fifty Years, 6.

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Clearing of the Hilton Village site started on April 18, 1918, and a few weeks later, actual construction of the homes began. By the early fall, a number of houses were ready for occupancy, and when the streetcar line extension was completed from the shipyard to the village in September, workers and their families began moving in. By October 1, 1918, thirty-one families had become residents of the project, and this number increased daily until the armistice on November 11. Unlike some government housing projects, construction work on Hilton Village continued, and by the end of 1919, the project was virtually complete.

In 1921 the government declared Hilton Village surplus property, and the U.S. Shipping Board put it up for sale. Henry E. Huntington, chairman of the board of the shipyard, proved to be the highest bidder for the property. After purchasing the village, he established the Newport News Land Corporation to operate it as an adjunct to the shipyard. One year later, an effort was made to sell the village's houses, but sales proved slow for many years because of the prices asked for them as well as the sharp decline in employment at the shipyard.

* In the final analysis, Hilton Village's chief importance lies in the fact, says Rouse, that it was "the nation's first government-built planned community."⁹ Nearly one hundred similar projects followed in its stead during World War I. Although efforts to continue and expand the government's role in housing in the 1920's failed, they were to come to fruition in the housing and slum clearance projects of the New Deal. Thus, Hilton Village and the projects like it, according to Glaab and Brown, set "a precedent for government action in housing" which since the 1930's has become one of the major areas of government social and economic endeavor.¹⁰

⁹Rouse, Endless Harbor, 53.

¹⁰Glaab and Brown, A History of Urban America, 296.

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